

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK PRIORITY
INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG
USLO PEKING

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, TH, CH, US

SUBJECT: BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR PRIME MINISTER
KRIANGSAK

REF: BANGKOK 6940

1. HERE, FOR YOUR USE, IS THE BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR
PRIME MINISTER KRIANGSAK REQUESTED IN REFTEL.

2. MAIN LINES OF PRC FOREIGN POLICY:

-- PREMIER HUA KUO-FENG'S WORK REPORT TO THE RECENTLY-
CONCLUDED NATIONAL PEOPLE'S CONGRESS EVIDENCED THE CON-
TINUITY OF BASIC PRC FOREIGN POLICY SINCE 1970-71.
TACTICALLY, PEKING CONTINUES TO MOVE AWAY FROM THE IDEOLO-
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GICAL STRICTURES OF THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION PERIOD TOWARD
RELATIVELY PRACTICAL POSITIONS. CHINA'S OVERRIDING
FOREIGN POLICY GOAL REMAINS THE RESTRICTION OF SOVIET
INFLUENCE THROUGHOUT THE WORLD; IT ADVOCATES A UNITED
FRONT OF ALL THIRD WORLD AND DEVELOPED COUNTRIES AGAINST
THE USSR. THE CHINESE CRITICIZE THE U.S. AS A SUPERPOWER
BUT THEY ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THE U.S. HAS A COMMON INTEREST
WITH CHINA IN CHECKING SOVIET EXPANSION AND THUS CAN BE
CONSIDERED A TACTICAL ALLY IN SOME SITUATIONS. CHINA ALSO

SEEKS TO BOOST ITS GLOBAL PRESTIGE AS A THIRD WORLD LEADER, AND TO EXPAND ECONOMIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL LINKS WITH DEVELOPED COUNTRIES.

3. THE USSR-PRC RIVALRY:

-- THERE HAS BEEN NO SIGNIFICANT RECENT IMPROVEMENT IN SINO-SOVIET RELATIONS. THE CHINESE HAVE PUBLICLY EXPRESSED THEIR DISPLEASURE WITH SOVIET SUPPORT FOR VIETNAM IN ITS CONFLICT WITH CAMBODIA AND OBJECTED TO MOSCOW'S ACTIVITY IN AFRICA. THEY HAVE ALSO CONTINUED CONDEMNATION OF SOVIET POLICIES IN THE MIDEAST, WESTERN EUROPE, JAPAN AND ELSEWHERE. THERE HAVE BEEN SOME INDICATIONS, HOWEVER, OF A CHINESE DESIRE TO IMPROVE THE "ATMOSPHERICS" OF SINO-SOVIET STATE-TO-STATE RELATIONS. THEY SENT A NEW AMBASSADOR TO MOSCOW AND, LAST SUMMER, RESUMED SINO-SOVIET BORDER RIVER NAVIGATION MEETINGS. CHINESE OFFICIALS HAVE NEVERTHELESS PLAYED DOWN THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THESE GESTURES, WHICH PROBABLY REPRESENT A CHINESE ATTEMPT TO REDUCE GRATUITOUS IRRITANTS IN SINO-SOVIET RELATIONS WHILE MAINTAINING BASIC GRIEVANCES AND DEMANDS.

4. US-PRC RELATIONS:

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-- FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH CHINA ARE A CENTRAL PART OF U.S. FOREIGN POLICY. WE ARE COMMITTED TO NORMALIZING OUR RELATIONS WITH THE PRC, AND WE ARE SEEKING WAYS IN WHICH THIS CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED WITHOUT UNDERCUTTING THE WELL-BEING OF THE PEOPLE OF TAIWAN. WE WILL NOT PROCEED IN A MANNER THAT RAISES DOUBTS ABOUT OUR CREDIBILITY, BUT WE ARE DETERMINED TO COMPLETE THE PROCESS. WE FRANKLY CANNOT PREDICT HOW LONG THIS PROCESS WILL TAKE.

5. AS THE CHINESE THEMSELVES HAVE SAID, THE U.S. AND THE PRC HAVE QUITE A FEW POINTS IN COMMON, MOST ESPECIALLY OUR CONCERN ABOUT THE SOVIET UNION. THESE SHARED INTERESTS ARE THE PRIMARY FOCUS OF THE US-PRC RELATIONSHIP, AND HELP EXPLAIN THE PATIENCE WITH WHICH PEKING APPROACHES THE NORMALIZATION QUESTION.

6. EVEN WITHOUT NORMALIZATION, US-PRC CONTACTS ARE EXPANDING. AMERICAN TOURIST TRAVEL TO CHINA THIS YEAR MAY INCREASE FIVE-FOLD OVER LAST YEAR. IN THE TRADE FIELD, OUR DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY JUST HOSTED A HIGH-LEVEL DELEGATION OF CHINESE PETROLEUM OFFICIALS IN JANUARY, AND WE EXPECT THAT COMMERCIAL CONTACTS WITH THE PRC WILL EXPAND FURTHER IN THE MONTHS AHEAD. HOWEVER, US-PRC TRADE IS AT THE RELATIVELY MODEST LEVEL OF \$400 MILLION, LESS THAN HALF THE LEVEL OF OUR CURRENT TRADE WITH THAILAND.

7. PRC POLICY TOWARD SOUTHEAST ASIA:

-- PEKING HAS VIEWED CLOSER TIES WITH THE NON-COMMUNIST COUNTRIES OF SOUTHEAST ASIA AS THE MOST EFFECTIVE MEANS TO ENHANCE CHINESE INFLUENCE, MOST IMMEDIATELY AS A WAY TO LIMIT SOVIET INFLUENCE (THE DOMINATING FACTOR IN CHINESE FOREIGN POLICY) AND, TO A LESSER DEGREE, VIETNAMESE INFLUENCE. PEKING'S EARLY RESERVATIONS TOWARD ASEAN TURNED TO WARM SUPPORT WHEN IT RECOGNIZED THAT ORGANIZA-
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TION'S POTENTIAL FOR ENHANCING SOUTHEAST ASIAN COHESION AGAINST ANY EFFORTS BY MOSCOW TO EXPAND ITS INFLUENCE. IN SOME WAYS, CHINA'S PRESENT POLICY TOWARD SOUTHEAST ASIA IS REMINISCENT OF ITS "SPIRIT OF BANDUNG" APPROACH TO THE REGION IN THE MID-1950'S. IT IS LIKELY TO BE MORE PERMANENT, HOWEVER, BECAUSE THIS TIME THE PRC IS MUCH MORE CONCERNED ABOUT THE POTENTIAL SOVIET ROLE IN THE REGION.

8. AT THE SAME TIME, PEKING HAS INDICATED NO CHANGE IN ITS POLICY OF CONTINUING PARTY-TO-PARTY RELATIONSHIPS WITH COMMUNIST INSURGENT GROUPS IN SEASIA. PEKING ALSO RETAINS ITS INTEREST IN SOUTHEAST ASIA'S OVERSEAS CHINESE POPULATION. THE PRC'S NEW POLICY ON OVERSEAS CHINESE IS APPARENTLY DESIGNED TO RETURN TO THE POLICY IN FORCE BEFORE THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION.

9. PRC POLICY TOWARD JAPAN, KOREA:

-- PEKING HAS LARGELY UNCOUPLED ITS ECONOMIC FROM ITS POLITICAL RELATIONS WITH JAPAN. THE CHINESE AND JAPANESE HAVE THUS MADE SIGNIFICANT ECONOMIC PROGRESS WITH THE SIGNING OF THE LONG TERM TRADE AGREEMENT, WHILE TALKS ON THE PEACE AND FRIENDSHIP TREATY ARE AT A VIRTUAL STAND-STILL. PEKING CONTINUES TO CHAMPION JAPAN'S CLAIM TO THE FOUR NORTHERN ISLANDS HELD BY THE USSR, ADDITIONAL JAPANESE REARMAMENT, AND MAINTENANCE FOR THE TIME BEING OF THE US-JAPAN MUTUAL SECURITY TREATY. REGARDING KOREA, PEKING CULTIVATES THE GOOD WILL OF KIM IL-SUNG AND ECHOES HIS CALLS FOR KOREAN REUNIFICATION AND FOR COMPLETE AND IMMEDIATE WITHDRAWAL OF U.S. FORCES FROM THE PENINSULA. CHINA EMPHASIZES, HOWEVER, THAT KOREAN REUNIFICATION SHOULD BE PEACEFUL; IT HAS NO DESIRE FOR AN ARMED CONFLICT.
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10. PEKING, MOSCOW, AND THE CONFLICT BETWEEN VIETNAM AND CAMBODIA:

-- NEITHER CHINA NOR THE SOVIET UNION IS COMFORTABLE WITH THE CURRENT HOSTILITIES BETWEEN CAMBODIA AND VIETNAM. THE

PRC HAS AN IMPORTANT POLITICAL INVESTMENT IN CAMBODIA AND

WOULD BE CHAGRINED TO SEE THE POL POT REGIME REPLACED BY A SURROGATE VIETNAMESE ADMINISTRATION STAFFED BY CAMBODIAN REFUGEES NOW RESIDENT IN VIETNAM. THIS WOULD STRENGTHEN THE SOVIET POSITION IN INDOCHINA AND ELIMINATE WHAT LIMITED INFLUENCE CHINA IS NOW EXERCISING IN INDOCHINA THROUGH POL POT. THE CHINESE APPEAR TO HAVE ATTEMPTED TO PERSUADE POL POT TO NEGOTIATE WITH VIETNAM. SIMULTANEOUSLY, HOWEVER, THEY HAVE CONTINUED TO SUPPLY ARMS TO CAMBODIA, AND WE BELIEVE THEY MAY HAVE STEPPED UP THIS SUPPORT IN RECENT WEEKS. THERE IS OBVIOUSLY A LIMIT TO CHINA'S PERSUASIVE CAPABILITY. VIETNAMESE DOMINATION OF CAMBODIA WOULD BE ANATHEMA TO CHINA AND POL POT IS TAKING ADVANTAGE OF PRECISELY THIS CHINESE FEAR.

11. PRC INTERESTS ARE COMPLEX. PEKING WANTS A SOLUTION THAT WILL PRESERVE A CAMBODIAN REGIME THAT IS INDEPENDENT OF HANOI. BUT IT DOES NOT WANT A REGIME IN CAMBODIA SO UNPREDICTABLE AND DISRUPTIVE AS TO PROVOKE EXTREME VIETNAMESE COUNTERACTION OR HEIGHTEN UNEASINESS ELSEWHERE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, ESPECIALLY THAILAND. AND IT ALSO DOES NOT WANT ITS RELATIONS WITH HANOI TO BECOME FURTHER EMBITTERED.

12. MOSCOW WANTS TO CONSOLIDATE ITS RELATIONS WITH HANOI; ITS INTERESTS LIE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF A FRIENDLY AND STRONG VIETNAM TO CURB THE GROWTH OF CHINESE INFLUENCE AND TO PREOCCUPY CHINESE ATTENTION TO THE SOUTH AS WELL AS THE NORTH. WITH NO INFLUENCE TO BE LOST IN PHNOM
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PENH, THE SOVIETS, WHILE AVOIDING OVERT INVOLVEMENT AND ADVOCATING AN EARLY NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT, HAVE ECHOED VIETNAMESE CRITICISM OF CAMBODIA. THEY HAVE MADE CLEAR THEIR SUPPORT FOR HANOI AND STRONGLY IMPLIED THAT CHINA IS THE ROOT CAUSE OF THE FIGHTING. THEY WOULD REGARD AN EXPANSION OF VIETNAMESE INFLUENCE AS FAVORABLE TO THEIR INTEREST. HOWEVER, WHILE CERTAIN TO BACK HANOI IN WHATEVER COURSE IT FOLLOWS, MOSCOW'S INTERESTS, LIKE PEKING'S, WOULD BE DAMAGED BY AN ALL-OUT MILITARY EFFORT. THIS COULD INCREASE HANOI'S DEMANDS FOR MOSCOW'S SUPPORT, DESTROY VIETNAM'S IMAGE AS THE AGGRIEVED PARTY IN THE DISPUTE, DAMAGE HANOI'S EFFORTS TO CULTIVATE RELATIONS ABROAD, ADVERSELY AFFECT MOSCOW'S INTEREST IN GOOD RELATIONS WITH THE NON-COMMUNIST SOUTHEAST ASIAN COUNTRIES, AND INTENSIFY FRICTION WITH PEKING.

13. VIETNAM IN SOUTHEAST ASIA:

-- VIETNAM APPEARS TO HAVE THREE MAJOR GOALS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA: TO ACHIEVE HEGEMONY OVER ALL OF INDOCHINA; TO

MAINTAIN FRIENDLY BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH ITS NON-

COMMUNIST NEIGHBORS; AND, THROUGH THE COMMUNIST PARTY APPARATUS, TO GIVE MODEST ENCOURAGEMENT TO REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENTS.

14. VIETNAM ALREADY HAS A DOMINANT ROLE IN LAOS. IT WOULD LIKE A SIMILAR ARRANGEMENT WITH CAMBODIA. IF THE KHMER CONTINUE TO REFUSE TO NEGOTIATE THE BORDER ISSUE WHILE MOUNTING INCREASINGLY HEAVY MILITARY INCURSIONS INTO VIETNAM, HANOI MAY BE TEMPTED TO GO ALL OUT IN EFFORTS TO REPLACE THE POL POT REGIME WITH ONE SUBSERVIENT TO ITS WILL. AS NOTED ABOVE, AN ATTEMPT AT A MILITARY
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SOLUTION WOULD SEVERELY EXACERBATE SRV-PRC DIFFERENCES. IT WOULD ALSO COMPLICATE HANOI'S DIPLOMACY AND STRAIN ITS RESOURCES STILL FURTHER.

15. VIETNAM SEEMS SERIOUS ABOUT DESIRING FRIENDLY BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH THE NON-COMMUNIST SOUTHEAST ASIAN COUNTRIES. IT IS GIVING FIRST PRIORITY TO RECONSTRUCTING ITS ECONOMY AND IS ENCOUNTERING SERIOUS ECONOMIC PROBLEMS. AT THE SAME TIME, IT IS EXPERIENCING TROUBLES WITH CAMBODIA AND IS CONCERNED OVER RELATIONS WITH THE PRC. IT IS THUS ACTIVELY SEEKING BOTH FOREIGN ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE AND CAPITAL AND POLITICAL SUPPORT. TRIPS THROUGHOUT ASIA BY RANKING VIETNAMESE OFFICIALS DURING THE PAST THREE MONTHS UNDERSCORE THE SERIOUSNESS OF THIS EFFORT.

16. THERE ARE A NUMBER OF ENCOURAGING SIGNS. VIETNAM HAS NOT SUPPLIED INSURGENT MOVEMENTS AND THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES WITH CAPTURED WEAPONRY, IT HAS NOT ALLOWED THE SOVIETS TO ESTABLISH A MILITARY BASE, AND IT IS ACTIVELY PARTICIPATING IN NUMEROUS INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS. IT IS IMPOSSIBLE, HOWEVER, TO JUDGE AT THIS POINT HOW COMMITTED THE SRV IS TO THIS CAREFUL COURSE.

17. THERE ARE PRACTICAL LIMITATIONS ON THE EXTENT OF HANOI'S SUPPORT OF REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENTS IN OTHER COUNTRIES, OR, FOR THAT MATTER, ACTIONS AGAINST CAMBODIA. MOST REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENTS ARE ORIENTED IDEOLOGICALLY TOWARDS PEKING. MILITARY ADVENTURES OR LARGESCALE SUBVERSION BEYOND INDOCHINA WOULD DIVERT BADLY NEEDED RESOURCES AND ALIENATE MANY OF VIETNAM'S FOREIGN BENEFITORS, INCLUDING THE USSR. VIETNAM, THEREFORE IS LIKELY TO LIMIT ITS SUPPORT TO GUERRILLA MOVEMENTS OUTSIDE OF INDOCHINA. THE ONLY RECIPIENT OF SRV SUPPORT AT PRESENT ARE THE GUERRILLAS IN THAILAND. ALTHOUGH THE SUPPORT IS LIMITED IN SCORE, IT NEVERTHELESS CAUSES PROBLEMS FOR THE RTG.
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18. WE PREFER THAT FOREGOING MATERIAL BE PROVIDED TO
KRIANGSAK IN ORAL BRIEFING RATHER THAN IN WRITTEN FORM. VANCE

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